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SUBJECT: GHAZNI PROVINCE - SIX MONTH REVIEW SECURITY,  
GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Classified By: PRT and Sub-National Governance Director Valerie C. Fowl  
er for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

1. (S/NF) The security situation in Ghazni province has generally improved over the past six months, with the security along Highway One increasing substantially since summer 2008, and with a seventy-five percent decrease in overall kinetic activity in the province from November 2009 to mid-March 2009. Nonetheless, insurgent activity continues in some areas (e.g., Nawa and Andar districts), and there is expectation of intensified attacks in the spring and summer. Ghazni's political environment has stabilized compared to the previous six months, but the provincial governor and council remain at loggerheads. The economic life of Ghazni's residents remains challenging, as prices have risen threefold, and indicators point to drought-like conditions this summer. Ghazni province's future will be heavily influenced by developments in the surrounding provinces, the governor's attempts to consolidate power in the run-up to summer elections, and the ability of Polish Task Force White Eagle to build on the infrastructure and capabilities put in place during the Poles, first months of responsibility for Ghazni.

SECURITY SITUATION REMAINS PRECARIOUS

2. (S/NF) The number of significant acts (SIGACTS) in Ghazni over the past six months is down compared to previous months, with a seventy-five percent decrease in overall kinetic activity from November 2008 until mid-March 2009. In particular, security along Highway One has improved substantially since summer 2008. However, violent insurgent activity continues. Nawa district in the south -- 23 miles from Pakistan and bordering Paktika and Zabul provinces ) remains out of GIROA control. The provincial capital of Ghazni City experienced a bomb attack against the deputy governor in October and a suicide bombing in December. Also in December, the Andar district administrator was assassinated outside his temporary residence in Ghazni City. In mid-February, a VBIED packed with over 2,500 kilograms of explosives was discovered in the city. Throughout the six months, enemy forces that did not relocate to Pakistan remained active, operating in multiple districts and within and around Ghazni City. As spring arrives, multiple source intelligence indicates that enemy forces are making their way back into Ghazni province and gearing up for violent spring and summer offensives.

3. (S/NF) The security situation in Ghazni over the next six months may well be closely related to developments in neighboring provinces. Expectations are that the U.S. 10th

Mountain Division, now operating in Wardak and Logar provinces, will push enemy forces in southern Wardak and Logar into Ghazni's northern districts of Zana Khan and Rashidan, where the enemy is already operating. The degree to which enemy forces are able to re-infiltrate Ghazni province also will be affected by increased border patrol efforts along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and Coalition operations in neighboring Paktika, Zabul and Uruzgan provinces. The incoming 6th Airborne Brigade from Poland will be able to fall in on the infrastructure and capabilities put in place by the first rotation, which assumed control of the province as a Polish battlespace over the past six months.

POLITICAL SITUATION STABILIZED,  
BUT UNLIKELY TO IMPROVE  
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¶4. (S/NF) Governor Usmani's tenure for the last ten months has stabilized the political situation in the province, as one of the main factors for instability over 2007-8 was the frequent change of provincial governors - four during the two-year period. Although he has remained mostly in Ghazni City since he assumed his position ten months ago, the governor has reached out to thousands of tribal elders, power brokers, and influential people in an effort to connect them with the GIROA, promote President Karzai, expand his own power base, and mitigate any negative consequences of Coalition operations. The governor has employed the traditional style of governance one would expect from a Kandahar Pashtun, leaning towards Ghazni's Pashtuns, and

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allowing his Hazaran deputy governor and other Hazaran local GIROA officials to connect with Ghazni's Hazaran community. Dr. Usmani has shown himself to be a relatively effective governor throughout, and appears to enjoy greater popularity than his predecessors.

¶5. (S/NF) The governor's efforts to consolidate his control over his security forces and political rivals has exposed his limitations and could cause turbulence in the near term. In late January, he made a move to assert his control over his ANP and ANA commanders, at one point accusing the local ANA kandak commander of corruption. The latter, COL Nasser, not only avoided any punishment, but was promoted to the position of his former boss, and is now the 203rd Corps Commander for Ghazni province. The governor has a new local ANA kandak commander, but it remains to be seen whether he will be able to control him, as the new commander now reports to COL Nasser. The governor has had greater success in exerting his influence over the provincial ANP Chief of Police, COL Zaman, and the provincial NDS Chief, Barakatullah, but there are rumors circulating that COL Zaman may depart the scene. If so, he is likely to be replaced at least temporarily by ANP Chief of Security General Nowruz, whom Governor Usmani disdains.

¶6. (S/NF) Upcoming Presidential and Provincial Council (PC) elections threaten to exacerbate tensions among rival political forces in the province. The Governor's rivalry with his PC came to a head in late February when the PC closed its offices out of protest to what it claims were the governor's efforts to marginalize it. While the PC lacks formal power, it can make the governor's life miserable by stirring up criticism against him, and by reporting him back to Kabul. In December, it did just that -- accusing Governor Usmani of corruption. He was promptly called to Kabul and reprimanded. The governor has accused the PC of playing politics, and sees them as a threat to Karzai's re-election. His confidence in his own political cleverness, however, does not necessarily guarantee that he will prevail in a showdown with the PC -- especially as Members of Parliament and important figures in Kabul's Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) have growing concerns about Governor

Usmani's efficacy.

17. (S/NF) Governor Usmani has made it clear he sees his main role as getting Ghazni province to vote for Karzai in the upcoming elections. His laser focus on this may blind him to his weak spots, and allow powerful forces he has alienated or ignored in Ghazni (including Ghazni's Hazaran community and the Tajik mafia) to mass against him. As the elections approach, we expect the pressure to increase on the governor. In this mix, it is likely the governor will focus his attention on Ghazni's Pashtuns, at the expense of the rest of the province's residents.

POSSIBILITIES FOR ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT REMAIN LIMITED  
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18. (S/NF) The local government's institutions in charge of development remain weak and require significant improvement before we can expect them to stand on their own two feet. While the governor claims to have held Provincial Development Committee (PDC) meetings on a regular basis since his arrival, the PRT has only been invited to and attended one, and by all accounts, it was the first such PDC in months. While it was inclusive and sets the stage for future meetings, Ghazni's PDC will require significant work before it becomes the institution it was meant to be. The PC needs to take a more proactive role in the PDC if it is to take a bottom-up, needs-based approach.

19. (S/NF) Input on provincial development from the grass roots level remains spotty and dependent on the initiative and determination of the people themselves. Since before the current PRT's arrival, petitioners brought project proposals to the PRT, which then secured the governor's approval before work began. This ad hoc approach favored Afghans with initiative and self-interest, including PC members, but also undercut a more systemic approach to development in Ghazni province. Unfortunately, the last six months has shown that the security and political environment encourages this. The sources of input on projects tend to reside in Ghazni City because it is a relatively secure population center. Security threats in the countryside make it less likely that GIROA representatives will venture into or serve in the field to gather information. Community leaders calling in from the field often times live in precarious situations under the

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supervision of Taliban and criminal elements. Development will thus remain driven by elites in Ghazni City for the time being, and will not necessarily reflect the needs of the people in Ghazni's remote, rural areas.  
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